

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
COLUMBIA BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Tuesday, May 7, 2024**

**7:00PM**

**Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room & Virtual  
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT**

**Members Present:** Steven M. Everett, First Selectman; Judy Ortiz, Deputy First Selectman; Lisa Napolitano, Selectman; Christopher Lent, Selectman; William O'Brien, Selectman.

**Also Present:** Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator, Beverly Ciurylo, Finance Director.

**CALL TO ORDER:** S. Everett called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1. **RULES OF CONDUCT FOR HYBRID VIRTUAL MEETING:** S. Everett read the rules of conduct for a hybrid virtual meeting.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the AGENDA as Presented. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
  - 4.1 **BOS Regular Meeting Minutes for April 16, 2024.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes for April 16, 2024. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
  - 4.2 **Public Hearing Meeting Minutes for April 16, 2024 for Proposed Revisions to Lake and Beach Use: Article II Vessels on Columbia Lake, Article III Safety Regulations on Columbia Lake, and Article IV Conduct at Town Beach.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Public Hearing Meeting Minutes for April 16, 2024 regarding the Proposed Revisions to Lake Ordinances Article II, Article III and Article IV. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
5. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.
6. **OLD BUSINESS:**
  - 6.1 **Tax Exemption for Business Incentive Program.** S. Everett said the Economic Development Committee (EDC) met and reviewed the Tax Exemption for the Business Incentive Program. EDC proposed the following changes to the business incentive program:
    - \$3,000,000 or more group would remain the same.
    - Over \$500,000 group add a 3<sup>rd</sup> year at 60%, and a 4<sup>th</sup> year at 50%.
    - \$25,000 and over group would make the 1<sup>st</sup> year 80% and the second year 70% and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year 60%.

S. Everett asked W. O'Brien to update the BOS on what EDC discussed. W. O'Brien said that the committee wanted to make the incentive program more equitable and that is what is presented to the BOS tonight.

M. Walter said that he has worked with the Town Attorney to make sure that the qualifying business match the ordinance. At the next BOS meeting the final ordinance will be provided and a town meeting can be set. M. Walter explained that in the ordinance there is a reference to Section 12-65b that describes permanent residential property of four or more dwelling units and that it is not designed for tax exemptions for regular housing. M. Walter explained that EDC would work on notifying the businesses of the tax incentive opportunity, then this would go to the BOS & FiPAC for review and then to a town meeting. The program could start within six months.

C. Lent asked if there is a sunset provision or would this remain in perpetuity. M. Walter said that referencing Section 12-65b which is an enabling legislation can be brought back up for review.

L. Napolitano asked why we would stop at the lesser amounts instead of one amount for everybody. S. Everett said that was the original guidance from the State. We were then told we could do whatever we want.

W. O'Brien said it was to encourage larger investments in the community or businesses rather than the smaller ones. S. Everett said he understands that statement, but a business that is spending 3 million or more is probably not as concerned about the taxes as opposed to a business that is spending \$100,000 a year.

W. O'Brien said the board could send it back to EDC and he would raise the concerns of the BOS with EDC.

**6.2 Municipal Advisory Services.** S. Everett said that two firms were brought in for interviews for the Municipal Advisory Services (Phoenix Advisors, LLC and Munistat Services Inc.) and Munistat Services Inc. was chosen. M. Walter said Munistat was more oriented towards small towns and east coast, Connecticut.

M. Walter explained that Munistat would interview the town and package up the town's finances and then advise the town on how to do short-term funding and bonding. Munistat would become the town's consultants in a bond issue and get the town rated with Standard and Poor's. M. Walter said one thing we are missing in the rating category is we need financial policies. For example, how do we use general fund.

S. Everett asked how much will the municipal advisory services costs. B. Ciurylo said the set fee is probably at \$20,000. The other fees for setting up bonds could be an additional \$50,000 to \$55,000. She said it does not matter how much we borrow.

J. Ortiz asked how long to get bonding. B. Ciurylo said six months to a year.

W. O'Brien asked about the Horace Porter School HVAC grant funding from the State. B. Ciurylo said that we have to wait until we get the award letter. J. Ortiz asked how long it would take to get the bond. M. Walter said approximately six

months. B. Ciurylo said it could take up to a year and there will be a process with Town Meetings and approvals. She said we have to wait until we get the award letter and the next step is to get short-term financing to start the process and then go out to bid until we get the bonding in place. B. Ciurylo said we can't do anything until we know about the electrical upgrade on the HVAC system at the school.

C. Lent said the projection right now is that we are not in the position until late summer or fall. One thought is some work can be done in the evenings, but the majority of construction wouldn't happen until summer 2025.

Discussion ensued about needing a municipal advisor to get financing as opposed to the town seeking the financing on their own.

W. O'Brien asked is this standard and typical for this type of cost. B. Ciurylo and M. Walter said this is typical.

C. Lent asked could we gain economies for bonding a larger amount for both roads and the HVAC system. B. Ciurylo said in order to bond we have to know exactly what we want to borrow. M. Walter said by the time the HVAC project is ready we should know what the others costs would be for the roads and culverts.

S. Everett asked do we have to bond for 6 million. B. Ciurylo said we need to talk to the Municipal Advisor because if we are getting 52% reimbursement we have to fund \$3 million or roughly half of the cost of the project and we have to figure out how we are going to pay for it. We can't rely on the money coming in to reimburse us to pay our cost. M. Walter said we have to seek short-term money. M. Walter said that we have to be careful about arbitrage from bonding more than the project cost.

C. Lent asked can we break up the bond in chunks as you need it. M. Walter said that's where the short-term financing would come in.

The BOS would like Munistat to attend the next BOS meeting on May 21, 2024.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**7.1 Columbia Lions Club 4th of July Parade fund request.** S. Everett said he had asked the Lions Club to start planning now for the Bicentennial. He said last year we seemed to be losing out on bands that used to come before. The Lions Club is requesting additional funding of \$2,500 to secure new acts for this year's parade and are exceeding the projected budget totals. S. Everett MOVED to Release the Funds Budgeted for the Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade to the Columbia Lions Club and to Approve an Additional \$2,500 as requested by the Columbia Lion's Parade Committee. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

**7.2 Request from Town of Columbia Garden Beautification Club to change the color of Yeomans Hall doors black.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Request from the Town of Columbia Garden Beautification Club to change the Color of Yeomans Hall and Town Hall doors to black. 3.0.2 with W. O'Brien and J. Ortiz Opposed. Discussion ensued about the history of door colors. S. Everett

MOVED to Withdraw the Previous Motion. 5.0. S. Everett MOVED all those in favor of leaving the doors white. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

7.3 **Authorization to purchase Mail-A-Map Street Maps.** M. Walter explained that the Town Clerk has been working with the Town of Hebron's Town Clerk to redo the Mail-A-Map Street Maps because the company who produced them are no longer producing them due to the lack of advertisement. The cost to print maps 1250 maps for Columbia would be \$1,087.50. Discussion ensued about the use of the maps by residents. Ann Dunnack, 103 Lake Rd. said if you are a new person in town the map is helpful. No motion was made to approve the purchase of the maps.

8. **COLUMBIA LAKE / DAM / BEACH:** S. Everett asked what the update is on the boathouse. M. Walter said the project will start May 12<sup>th</sup>.

9. **APPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS:**

9.1 **Retirement of Connie Kisluk, Zoning Enforcement Officer.**

9.2 **Approval of Job Description for Zoning Enforcement Officer.** Discussion ensued about the edits made to the job description. The following will remain in the job description, "Prepares reports and memorandums for Town Administrator, Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and other Town Departments and officials. Maintains records of permits and correspondence."

S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Proposed Changes made to the job description for the Zoning Enforcement Officer as verbally amended. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

9.3 **Appointments of Marine Patrol Officers:**

- **Brian J. Auld, Marine Patrol Supervisor**
- **Ronald Smith**
- **Jody Gross**
- **Tom Griffith**

S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the APPOINTMENTS of Brian J. Auld, Ronald Smith, Jody Gross, and Tom Griffith as Marine Patrol Officers. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

10. **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

10.1 **Memorial Day Observance, Monday, May 27th, 2024.** M. Walter said that Tim Ackert has agreed to be the guest speaker at the Memorial Day Observance.

M. Walter said CCM sent out an emergency request that we contact our local legislator, Tim Ackert regarding Senate Bill 328, which would enable an individual to collect full workers compensation benefits and full pension benefits allowing an employee to earn more out of work than they regularly make in their salary. This totally eliminates the incentive to go back to work. Municipalities do not want this to move forward, but the unions want to get it in and they'll probably get it.

10.2 **Culvert & Road Subcommittee Update.** M. Walter said we had the first meeting for the Culvert & Road Subcommittee and the group is willing to go out on a road trip to review specific issues. This will be scheduled in the next couple of weeks.

S. Everett said there's more answers than just throwing out half a million to three million dollars at the culvert and road repairs. He said he met with another town manager of a much larger town and they had come up with a solution that was cheaper to repair a culvert and asked M. Walter to bring the idea to the committee. S. Everett said we want the subcommittee to think outside the box. He said it doesn't mean we would necessarily go forward with the solution, but if it can work and it's safe and the town engineer reviews and approves the solution it is worth considering it. S. Everett said the Hunt Road culvert turned out very well.

**10.3 ARPA Update.** M. Walter thanked B. Ciurylo for keeping track of all the ARPA funds and said we really got ahead of a lot of capital upgrades.

**10.4 Horace Porter School HVAC Grant Update.** Discussed earlier.

M. Walter said the Annual Town Budget Meeting will be held on May 14<sup>th</sup>. He said that he had a meeting today with the Town Clerk and Mark Vining, as the Moderator to review procedures. Talked to fire marshal we can have up to 284 people in chairs.

M. Walter said normally we hand out ballots during the Annual Town Budget meeting, which is usually 60 people or so, but the anticipation is there will probably be many more people. The Fire Marshal said that there can only be 284 people in Yeomans. He asked the board if they thought it would be a good idea to have 2 volunteers from the Registrar of Voters handing out ballots and vetting that residents are eligible to vote. The consensus is that would be ok to do that.

W. O'Brien said that at the Public Hearing he understands that it is important that residents express their views and be heard, but he was disappointed about the lack of civility and the personal attacks.

**11. CORRESPONDENCE:**

**11.1 CT State Police Monthly Report for April 2024.**

**11.2 East Coast Greenway's " Ride the East" event, Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> featured stop Mono Pond State Park.**

**11.3 Articles from The Willimantic Chronicle**

- **Columbia Manufacturing hires new HR Manager.**
- **Columbia resident wins Centenary University award.**

**12. BUDGET:**

**12.1 Transfers:** None.

**12.2 Refunds:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the REFUNDS Totaling \$415.31 as Presented. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

**13. APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Payment of Bills Totaling \$363,487.28, consisting of 2023-2024 Emergency, 2023-2024 Regular, Credit Card, and Paychex. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

**14. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.

15. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** C. Lent said the Horace Porter, HVAC Building Committee is required by General Statute to hire a commissioning agent. The professional cost estimate included \$60,000 earmarked for the commissioning agent. The committee would like to recommend hiring a project manager. He said they considered a Clerk of the Works or a Project Manager. They felt that a Project Manager can be more technical, answer questions between designer and contractors, and keep the Town and the HVAC Building Committee up to date. The Project Manager will be paid by the hour as needed. The Horace Porter School Facilities Manager has the final version of the Request for Proposal and will get that to the Town Administrator for posting.
  
16. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: Real estate per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(D); Pending Litigation per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B); Personnel per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(A).** S. Everett MOVED to Suspend the meeting at 8:23 PM and Enter into Executive Session and invite Mark Walter, Town Administrator to join the Executive Session. In addition to inform of a personnel item. S. Everett MOVED to Exit Executive Session at 8:31 PM.
  - 16.1 **Real Estate:** S. Everett MOVED to Authorize Mark Water, Town Administrator hire a land surveyor for property at 330 Route 66 and to send proposed property purchase to Planning & Zoning for an 8-24 Approval. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
  
17. **ADJOURNMENT:** S. Everett MOVED to ADJOURN at 8:32 PM. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie